



Department of Justice

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THREE MEN CHARGED WITH CONSPIRING TO COMMIT TERRORIST ACTS OVERSEAS, PROVIDING MATERIAL SUPPORT TO TERRORISTS

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Three men who resided in the Toledo, Ohio area have been charged with conspiring to commit acts of terrorism against persons overseas, including U.S. military personnel serving in Iraq, and with conspiring to provide material support to terrorists, the Department of Justice announced Tuesday.

A five-count indictment returned by a federal grand jury in Cleveland, Ohio, last week and unsealed today names as defendants: Mohammad Zaki Amawi, 26, formerly of Toledo; Marwan Othman El-Hindi, 42, of Toledo; and Wassim I. Mazloun, 24, of Toledo. The three are charged with conspiring, together and with others, to kill or maim persons outside of the United States, including U.S. military personnel serving in Iraq, and with conspiring to provide material support to terrorists. Amawi is also charged, individually, with distributing information regarding explosives and two counts of making verbal threats against the President of the United States.

All three defendants are currently in custody and are scheduled to appear in federal courts in Cleveland and Toledo this afternoon. Amawi is a citizen of the United States as well as a citizen of Jordan, El-Hindi is a U.S. citizen, and Mazloun is a permanent legal resident.

According to the indictment, the three defendants engaged in activities in furtherance of their common goal to wage violent jihad, or "holy war," against American soldiers and Coalition allies serving in Iraq. Such activities included training and target shooting, receiving instructions in the construction and use of explosives – including improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and "suicide bomb vests," – recruiting others to participate in jihad training, attempting to raise funds to finance the training and to support violent jihad activities, and attempting to acquire and deliver materials – including explosives and computers – to others engaged in violent jihad in the Middle East. The indictment alleges that the conspiracy began sometime prior to November 2004.

"Individuals who conspire to aid terrorists from within our borders threaten the safety of all Americans," said Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales. "This case stands as a reminder of the need for continued vigilance. We are committed to protecting Americans – here and overseas, particularly the brave men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces who are serving our country by striving valiantly to preserve democracy and the rule of law in Iraq."

"This case demonstrates that terrorism has no boundaries and that it is essential for all of us, no matter where we live, to be vigilant," said U.S. Attorney Gregory A. White of the Northern District of Ohio. "It is gratifying to know that through law enforcement actions taken here, within the borders of our own country, we were able to prevent potential harm to those in our military serving abroad."

“These arrests and indictments are examples of how, through close cooperation with our partners and enhanced intelligence capabilities, we are able to detect terrorist planning and prevent acts of terrorism before they occur,” said FBI Director Robert S. Mueller, III.

The three defendants are also charged with conspiring to provide material support, including money, training, communications equipment, computers and personnel (including themselves) to unnamed co-conspirators in the Middle East, knowing that the materials would be used in waging violent jihad against the U.S. military and Coalition forces in Iraq and elsewhere. According to the indictment, Amawi traveled to Jordan on Aug. 22, 2005 with five laptop computers for delivery to the co-conspirators. Those computers were never delivered.

Amawi also allegedly downloaded a video from a “mujahideen website” which depicted the step-by-step construction and use of a bomb vest, and then copied it on a disk and distributed to an individual who was going to be providing jihad training to the defendants. That individual – identified in the indictment as “the Trainer” – has been cooperating since the beginning of this investigation and acting on behalf of the government.

The indictment also alleges that in October 2004 and again in March 2005, Amawi made verbal threats to kill or inflict bodily harm upon the President of the United States.

The maximum sentence on the charge of conspiring to kill or maim persons in a foreign country is 35 years in prison, or life in prison if the conspiracy is to kill. The maximum sentence on count two of the indictment, conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists, is 15 years in prison. The maximum sentence on the charge of distributing information regarding explosives is 20 years in prison, and the charges of making verbal threats against the President each carry a maximum sentence of five years in prison.

An indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is entitled to a fair trial in which it will be the government’s burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Thomas E. Getz of the Terrorism Unit of the U.S. Attorney’s Office in the Northern District of Ohio, and Trial Attorney Gregg N. Sofer of the Counterterrorism Section of the Criminal Division at the Department of Justice. The investigation was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Joint Terrorism Task Force in Toledo, Ohio, with the assistance of the U.S. Secret Service.

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